Laleh Atashi, Mohammad Hossein Bakhshandeh

Little Red Riding Hood in Sheep's Clothing: A Psychoanalytic Reading of Angela Carter's *The Werewolf*

https://doi.org/10.1515/fabula-2018-0105

Zusammenfassung: Dieser Artikel versucht, Angela Carters Kurzgeschichte *The Werewolf* im Lichte der Lacan'schen Psychoanalyse zu interpretieren, und betrachtet die Reise des kleinen Mädchens in dieser Geschichte als einen Übergangsritus, dessen Ende der Imaginäre Orden ist. Die Initiation des Mädchens als Frau/Mutter findet nicht in dem Moment statt, in dem sie in die symbolische Ordnung eintritt, sondern als sie ihrer Großmutter nachfolgt. Der Werwolf hat starke intertextuelle Verbindungen mit Rotkäppchen. Die archetypischen Verweise auf die weibliche Natur in der Kurzgeschichte können als Versuch Carters interpretiert werden, die Grenzen im Märchen zu verschieben, um eine verschlingende Weiblichkeit– in alten Geschichten gezähmte – wiederzubeleben und sie im Werwolfmotiv zu reinkarnieren.

Summary: This article attempts to interpret Angela Carter's *The Werewolf* in light of Lacanian psychoanalysis and considers the journey of the little girl in the story as a rite of passage the final terminal of which is the Imaginary Order. The girl's initiation into womanhood/motherhood occurs not when she enters the Symbolic Order but when she succeeds her grandmother. *The Werewolf* has strong intertextual connections with *Little Red Riding Hood* also known as *Little Red Cap*. The archetypal references to female nature in the short story can be construed as Carter's attempt to push the boundaries of the fairy tales in order to resurrect a devouring femininity – tamed in old tales – and reincarnate her into the werewolf.

Laleh Atashi, Assistant Professor of English Literature, Shiraz University, Foreign Languages and Linguistics, Shiraz, Iran, E-Mail: laleh.atashi@shirazu.ac.ir
Mohammad Hossein Bakhshandeh, BA in English Literature, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran, E-Mail: mohobakhshandeh@gmail.com

Brought to you by | Tulane University
Authenticated
Download Date | 1/12/19 10:15 PM

Introduction

Angela Carter (1940–1992) was an English novelist, short story writer and journalist. Most of her fictional writings mix realist and surrealist settings to describe female characters that cannot be accommodated within social and cultural definitions of normality. One of the most remarkable features of her fiction is her reworking of fairy tales in the course of which she challenges Christian and pre-Christian patriarchal violence by creating aggressive female characters. *The Werewolf* tells the story of a little girl who is sent into a dangerous forest by her mother in order to pay a visit to her grandmother. The wolf appears and the girl slashes off the wolf's right forepaw. Later on, she reaches her grandmother's cottage to find that her sick grandmother's right hand has been cut off. She yells for help and neighbors think that the old woman is a witch and beat her out of the forest till she falls dead. The girl does not go back to her own house and chooses to dwell in the house of her deceased grandmother.

As a revisitation of national and international folk heritage, retellings of fairy tales might sound conservative due to the seemingly universal message they are supposed to convey. However, there is a space for reconsideration of old values in retold stories. Stephens and McCallum argue that retellings can "introduce macrodiscoursal and microdiscoursal modification in order to challenge the dominant metanarratives [...] so as to preserve these elements of the past while seeking ways to interrogate traditional metanarratives" (Stephens/McCallum 1998, 227). Similarly, Zipes asserts that retellings of fairy tales can be related to "a longing by adult writers to open up and subvert traditional socialization by posing infinite textual possibilities for the subjects/readers to define themselves against the background of the finite choices proposed by society" (Zipes 1991, 100). Rosemary Jackson uses Lacanian terminology to elucidate the role of fantasy in revising the world in which we live. She argues that the most subversive fantasies

> attempt to *transform* the relations of the imaginary and the symbolic. They try to set up possibilities for radical transformation by making fluid the relations between these realms, suggesting, or projecting the dissolution of the symbolic through violent reversal or rejection of the process of the subject's formation (Jackson 1981, 91).

If we acknowledge the role of fantasy in fairy tales, their deconstructive potential comes to the fore. Zipes seems to be moving in the same line when he discusses the transformative power of fairy tales:

Brought to you by | Tulane University
Authenticated
Download Date | 1/12/19 10:15 PM

> The appeal of fairy tales still has a great deal to do with utopian transformation and the desire for a better life, and the manner in which we make it relevant in our mental representations will be in reaction to the outside stimuli and to moral codes instituted by hegemonic groups within a respective society. The more social relations make us discontent and feel as though we were objects alienated from our own communities, the more we seek a haven in mental projections of other worlds. (Zipes 2006, 106)

Fairy tales despite their seeming timelessness, harbor culture specific perspectives and offer multi-layered interpretations of human experience. Retellings, adaptations and appropriations of fairy tales are subtle strategies to reinterpret and restructure, and very often deconstruct our world. *Little Red Cap* or *Little Red Riding Hood* or *The Story of Grandmother* are different versions of a European tale in which a young girl is sent to her grandmother and meets a wolf on the way. In Grimm's version, *Little Red Cap*, the little girl gives her grandmother's address to the wolf, the wolf eats her and her grandmother, the hunter appears at the end of the story and cuts the sleeping wolf's belly to save the young girl and the old woman. In Grimm, another version is related in which the girl visits her grandmother a second time and tells her about the wolf she met on the road, they get prepared for the coming of the wolf and together manage to drown him. In Charles Perrault's version, the girl is not warned by her mother at the beginning, and is eaten up by the wolf because she dares to talk to a stranger. There is also another version, *The Story of Grandmother,* published by Paul Delarue, in which the girl is sent to her grandmother's house without a warning by her mother, meets the wolf, and unwittingly gives him the address of her grandmother's house. When she reaches her destination, her grandmother has been eaten up by the wolf, she gets naked and lies down besides the wolf since he pretends to be her grandmother, and the little girl finds out, tricks the wolf and runs away. All these versions can be palimpsestuously traced in Angela Carter's *The Werewolf*. To these, she adds other versions of wolf and werewolf stories that she recounts at the beginning of *Company of the Wolves*, one of her short stories in *The Bloody Chamber*. The hectic world in which Carter's retellings occur offers interesting insights if seen through the psychoanalytical perspective. Bettelheim (1976) offers a Freudian analysis of classical fairy tales. His interpretations, informative as they are, might well serve to be points of departure for writers who wish to revisit and revise classical fairy tales. In this paper, Lacanian psychoanalysis is used because his concept of desire is "intersubjective, public, and future-oriented" in contrast to Freud's concept of wish which is "subjective, private and regressive" (Wright 1988, 619). The deterministic paradigm of Freudian wish yields to a more interactive and changeable pattern of desire in Lacan.

Brought to you by | Tulane University
Authenticated
Download Date | 1/12/19 10:15 PM

Lacan and Freud have points of convergence but Lacan offers a revision of Freud's Oedipalism. They are similar in that both highlight the role of phallus in the oedipal stage. But while Freud holds the phallus to be the real penis, Lacan underscores "the imaginary or symbolic character of the phallus" (Borch-Jacobsen/Brick 1994, 278). With his emphasis on the role of language, Lacan seems to be moving away from Freud's biological essentialism into a constructivist version of human phenomena. Another difference between Freud and Lacan seems to be the Lacanian interrogation of the binary opposition between conscious and unconscious that used to be mutually exclusive in Freudian psychoanalysis. "The conscious," Lacan argues, "bears the marks of the signifiers impressed on it. The text no longer harbors regressive wishes but participates in engagements with ongoing desires encompassing past and future experience" (Wright 1988, 619), hence, by using the Lacanian rather than the Freudian perspective, critics can approach fairy tales from a post-structuralist vantage point and find the futurist agenda and the subversive vein of retold stories.

Review of Literature

Angela Carter's retellings of fairy tales have enchanted readers, painters, illustrators, film makers as well as critics and scholars. She makes feminist statements about the nature of human beings by peopling her fictional world with manimals. Werewolves for example, have been sources of interest to feminists and psychoanalysts. Andermahr and Phillips (2012) have brought together a wide variety of critics from across different disciplines to evaluate the fictional world of Angela Carter. One of the articles in that book (Jowett 2012) is an examination of the *The Company of Wolves* adaptations. The interaction between horror movies, dark romances, cinematic and radio adaptations are analyzed and their impact on the formation of gendered identities is discussed. The results indicate that "representations of vampires and werewolves have long combined sexuality with violence, since one, often overlays or collapses into the other" (Jowett 40). Bacchilega (1997, 60) considers Carter's *The Werewolf* as "a quasi ethnographic sketch of early modern upland peasant life" that has emerged "from a specific economic and social situation". Moss asserts that the distinguishing feature of Carter's retellings of fairy tales is her ability to show the operation of defamiliarization in her short stories. Moss holds that "traditional tales of wolves (and werewolves), such as Little Red Riding Hood, cast the wolf as masculine threat and danger, a force to be fought on its own terms of violence and dominance" (Moss 1998, 188), and thus considers the wolf as a masculine threat in a hetero-

Brought to you by | Tulane University
Authenticated
Download Date | 1/12/19 10:15 PM

sexual paradigm. Carter, however, challenges the conventional gender of the werewolf and blurs the distinction between the werewolf and the grandmother and the little girl. Some feminists however believe that Carter is trapped in the web of "conservative sexism" (Makinen 1992, 4). Makinen argues against feminist critics who hold that Carter's retelling of fairy tales is doomed to conventionalism due to the misogynistic ideology of fairy tales, and asserts that each retelling is negotiating the former ideology into a revisionary perspective:

> These are late twentieth-century adult fairy-tales conscious of their own fictive status and so questioning the very constructions of roles while asserting them. When a young girl resolutely chops off the paw of the wolf threatening her, and we read 'the wolf let out a gulp, almost a sob [...] wolves are less brave than they seem' – we are participating in the re-writing of a wolf's characteristics and participating not only in the humour but also the arbitrariness. 'Nature' is not fixed but fluid within fiction (Makinen 5–6).

Makinen's interpretation echoes social constructionism according to which identity has everything to do with social norms and nothing to do with biological determinism. Ryan-Sautour examines the processes of re-writing in intermedial productions of Carter's wolf stories and holds that the relation between the fairy tales and their postmodern renditions is palimpsestuous. In this article, adaptations are discussed in terms of survival strategies:

> The wolf tales, from their initial re-performance in Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*, through their intermedial metamorphoses, occupy various times and spaces, thus allowing voices behind elusive palimpsests to emerge, even the voices of Freudian appropriations of the tale [...], or of feminist revisionists that have come to light in contemporary perspectives about the tale (Ryan-Sautour 2012, 10).

Despite the arguments that refer to adaptation as an inevitable return to conventions, Ryan-Sautour asserts that adaptations foreground issues that make sense in the contemporary world and therefore reveal the possibility of change and reformation. In the same line, Bonnici (1997, 9) maintains that Carter's rewritings of fairy tales do not reinforce patriarchy but work to subvert their male dominated structure by giving voice to formerly silent protagonists and by "the carnivalization of the original situation." Bonnici admits that fairy tales make female subordination seem romantic and can hardly embody a feminist agenda, but goes on to indicate that "magic and magical metamorphosis" help to highlight psychic transformation. The affinities between Carter's fictional world and Gabriel García Márquez's magic realism "brings into effect the subversion of the fairy-tales' original themes" (Bonnici 1997, 9).

Redefinitions of sexuality in the fictional world of Carter have been examined by a number of scholars. Sheets comments on Carter's attitude towards women's

Brought to you by | Tulane University
Authenticated
Download Date | 1/12/19 10:15 PM

oppression. Although Carter, Sheets notes, does not reduce the cause of women's oppression to pornography and takes into consideration economic, social and psychological factors as well, she does assume that "pornography encourages violence against women and that the association of sex, power, and sadomasochism in pornography is part of society's common prescription for heterosexual relations" (Sheets 1998, 655). Carter is trying to define a female sexuality which lies outside the patriarchal paradigms. Therefore, in the rewriting of the fairy tales, Carter tries to write back, and challenge the romanticizing plotline of fairy tales traceable in pornography. Sceats discusses the cultural and psychological factors that contribute to the warm reception vampires are enjoying in the twenty first century. The appeal of vampires might lie in "their ravenous displaced sexuality whose oral focus touches some atavistic chord in our consumerist culture" (Sceats 2001, 107). Their appeal might also have to do with their power to "evoke a marginal world of darkness, secrecy, vulnerability, excess, and horror" (Sceats 2001, 107). She concludes her essay by highlighting the power of the vampire to deconstruct the binary oppositions: the vampire is "poised between the two states of living and extinction", the vampire transgresses the boundary "between man and beast, man and God, man and woman" fact and fiction, history and folklore (Sceats 2001, 119). The vampire exudes ambiguity, and despite the sexual excess it signifies, can never consummate the thirst of its fans.

Many interesting researches have been done on Angela Carter's fiction and her wolf stories. Most of them assume a feminist approach, and some examine the horizon of expectation and take into consideration cultural factors and adaptive strategies and the role of fairy tales in contemporary culture. Carter offers different variations of the werewolf in *The Bloody Chamber*. *Wolf-Alice* for example, seems to be the allegory of Lacan's Mirror Stage. Little Red Riding Hood in *The Company of Wolves* welcomes teen defloration and willingly sleeps "between the paws of the tender wolf." In *The Werewolf*, which is the focus of study in this article, Carter challenges the conventional gender of the werewolf and blurs the distinction between the werewolf and the grandmother *and* the little girl. Different representations of the maternal figure can be traced in this story.

A Lacaninan reading of Carter's retellings of fairy tales can lay bare issues that Carter tried to challenge, criticize and revise in her fictional world. Lacan, in Seminar XVII, theorizes the mother as a "big crocodile" apt to devour the child (quoted in Fink 1995, 56–57). Accordingly, Barzilai argues that the "formula of the Name-of-the-Father 'over' the Desire of the Mother is neither descriptive, nor prescriptive but [...] primarily defensive" (Barzilai 1999, 225). Lacan's theory of the monster-mother goes through complications when seen through the feminist perspective. Is the monster mother depicted in *The Werewolf* as frightening in Carter's rendition as it is in Lacan's theory? Does Carter play with stereotypes to

Brought to you by | Tulane University
Authenticated
Download Date | 1/12/19 10:15 PM

encourage the formation of new gendered identities or is she merely reiterating patriarchal stereotypes in her retellings? These questions cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. There is a good deal of ambivalence in Carter's complicated palimpsestuous fiction.

Lacaninan psychoanalysis

To elucidate the process of psychological development, Jacques Lacan divides the developmental stages of the infant into three phases. From zero to six months of age, the infant cannot distinguish between his/her own self, parents and the surrounding world. There is no sense of self, no sense of identity, and no sense of boundary; the child is thus closest to what Lacan terms "The Real". Absence, loss and lack are not experienced by the infant in this phase; body is fragmented into sites of pleasure and explored by the infant as if it belongs to the surrounding world. Homer describes The Real as "a kind of ubiquitous undifferentiated mass from which we must distinguish ourselves, as subjects, through the process of symbolization". (Homer 2005, XX) Homer elucidates the concept further and notes that "*the real does not exist*, as existence is a product of thought and language and The Real precedes language. The Real is 'that which resists symbolization absolutely'" (Homer 2005, 83). From the sixth to the eighteenth month of age, the baby enters the mirror stage that marks The Imaginary Order. The infant sees his/her own image in the mirror and identifies with the image he/she sees reflected there. Self is defined not only in terms of the image reflected in the mirror, but also in terms of the way the mother mirrors the infant back by responding and ministering to his/her needs. Lacan describes the mirror stage as

> a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for all the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopedic – and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the infant's entire mental development. (Lacan 1977, 4)

Self is constructed as a subject in the mirror stage; the infant has the illusion of a coherent self and identity; self and other are thence unified. The fragmented body develops into a coherent ideal-I. The Imaginary, Evans explains,

> is the realm of image and imagination, deception and lure. The principal illusions of the imaginary are those of wholeness, synthesis, autonomy, duality and, above all, similarity.

Brought to you by | Tulane University
Authenticated
Download Date | 1/12/19 10:15 PM

> The Imaginary is thus the order of surface appearances which are deceptive, observable phenomena which hide underlying structure (Evans 2006, 84).

The time-span between eighteen months to four years of age marks the initiation of the child into the realm of language. If in The Imaginary Order, the child had the illusion of being one with the mother and the surrounding world, in The Symbolic Order, the child undergoes separation from the mother which in turn engenders a sense of eternal loss that haunts him/her from this stage on. Throughout life, there is the desire to recapture the lost sense of unity that the infant enjoyed in The Imaginary Order. The Symbolic, Evans notes,

> is the realm of the Law which regulates desire in the Oedipus complex. It is the realm of culture as opposed to the Imaginary Order of nature. Whereas The Imaginary is characterized by dual relations, The Symbolic is characterized by triadic structures, because the intersubjective relationship is always 'mediated' by a third term, the big Other. The Symbolic Order is also the realm of DEATH, of ABSENCE and of LACK (Evans 2006, 204).

Lacan believes that The Symbolic Order limits the human universe through language and discourse:

> It is the discourse of the circuit in which I am integrated. I am one of its links. It is the discourse of my father [...]. I am obliged to pick up again the discourse he bequeathed to me, not simply because I am his son, but because one can't stop the chain of discourse, and it is precisely my duty to transmit it in its aberrant form to someone else (Lacan 1988, 89).

Lacan highlights the role played by the Name of Father in The Symbolic Order and admits the patriarchal determinism brought about by the systematicity of language. Lacan defends the patriarchal determinism and holds that the dual relation between the child and its mother is destructive because

> the mother is a big crocodile, and you find yourself in her mouth. You never know what may set her off suddenly, making those jaws clamp down. [...] There is a roller, made of stone [...] what we call the phallus. It is the roller which protects you, should the jaws suddenly close (quoted in Fink 1995, 56–57).

The fundamental concepts of developmental psychology as put forth by Lacan can help to analyze fictional works where the mother-daughter dyad determines the path of growth. Bettelheim (1976) interprets the role of the father in the Brothers Grimm's version of Little Red-Cap and holds that the wolf is the destructive side of the little girl's father. He refers to the little girl's puberty and her oedipal longing for her father and characterizes the wolf as the seduced father apt to rape his daughter. The hunter, Bettelheim argues, is the redeeming father who kills

Brought to you by | Tulane University
Authenticated
Download Date | 1/12/19 10:15 PM

the dangerous wolf. Although we do not directly see the girl's father, he is present in two forms: the hunter and the wolf (Bettelheim 1976, 142). The little girl and her grandma come out of the wolf's belly safe and sound through the cesarean performed by the hunter; to put it more simply, they are reborn. The act of giving birth and role of the midwife are both played by the two father figures – the wolf and the hunter – who have usurped the position of the mother. We think this is the point where Carter, enters as a feminist writer and critic to shift the focus away from the Freudian emphasis on the father, to the devouring wolf as the mother – very much reminiscent of what Lacan calls the "crocodile mother."

The Werewolf by Angela Carter narrates the story of a little girl who goes on a forest journey and finds a new home at the end. The main character goes through a transition and enters a new phase of life. The stations in the life of the little girl are haloed in symbols. Traces of The Real, The Imaginary and The Symbolic will be tracked in the symbolic structure of *The Werewolf*. This reading indicates the problems and complications of the patriarchal dimensions of Lacanian psychoanalysis when applied to feminist fiction.

Imaginary Mothers and Symbolic Fathers in *The Werewolf*

The Werewolf depicts a mother who pushes her child out into a dangerous world, maternal figures who haunt the unconscious of the little girl, and maternal figures eliminated and at the same time reproduced. The cyclic death and rebirth of the maternal element hint at the irrevocable enthronement of the mother in Carter's retelling of *Little Red Riding Hood*.

From the very beginning of the story, different cultural icons collide: "there will be a crude icon of the virgin behind a guttering candle, the leg of a pig hung up to cure, a string of drying mushrooms" (Carter 1995, 210). There is the Christian icon of the Virgin Mary on the one hand, and then superstitious icons of witchery such as leg of a pig and a string of dying mushrooms both supposedly embodying a spiritual energy competing with that of the Virgin. The "curative" – whether physical or spiritual – function of the Virgin, the leg of a pig and the string of dying mushrooms hints at the social world of ideological laws and mandates that have stripped the world of northern woodsmen down to cold, brief and harsh drudgery. The cult of Virgin Mary and that of witchery are signifiers through which the child defines his/her ills and cure. The reductive and regulatory force of The Symbolic Order, enacted by Christian and pre-Christian spiritual systems, finds an echo in the curt sentences of the first paragraph lacking active verbs:

Brought to you by | Tulane University
Authenticated
Download Date | 1/12/19 10:15 PM

> It is a northern country; they have cold weather, they have cold hearts.
> Cold; tempest; wild beasts in the forest. It is a hard life. Their houses are built of logs, dark and smoky within. There will be a crude icon of the virgin behind a guttering candle, the leg of a pig hung up to cure, a string of drying mushrooms. A bed, a stool, a table. Harsh, brief, poor lives (Carter 1995, 210).

Apart from the religious icons, geography and environment act upon the life of people. The circumcised language and the frozen atmosphere are indexes of the curbing Symbolic Order.

As the story goes on, the gendered and gendering functions of the Symbolic Order come to the fore: on Walpurgisnacht – a ritual related to witchery – the Devil himself invites the witches to graveyards to "dig up fresh corpses and eat them" (Carter 1995, 210). The witches eating dead bodies turn into symbols of fertility, nourishing and maternity: the eating of the corpses indicate a desire on the part of the witch-mother to return to the period of pregnancy when there was a union between child and mother. Separation and the ensuing lack are not only enacted by the children, but also by the desiring witch-mothers. But these mothers should wait for the invitation card of the Devil. The Devil who invites witches to his cannibalistic party stands at the top of the gendered hierarchy of occultism and hence represents the impregnating Father who rules and regulates the fertility of the maternal figures, or the witches. Female characters in *The Werewolf* have a predilection for eating: witches are cannibals; the grandmother needs oatcakes and butter, and the starving wolf that represents the archetypal wild woman, goes for the little girl's throat to drink her blood. This unconscious hunger reveals the oral demands of young and old female characters that have been denied the necessary nourishment in the world of conventional fairy tales. Carter attempts to highlight the sinister ubiquity of the banned Nourishing Mother despite the reverberating echo of the Name of the Father. The violent act of stoning occurs when old women, deemed to be witches by society – are at their most maternal moments:

> When they discover a witch – *some old woman whose cheeses* ripen when her neighbor's do not, another old woman whose black cat, oh, sinister! follows her about all the time, they strip the crone, search her for marks for the supernumerary nipple her familiar sucks. They soon find it. Then they stone her to death (Carter 1995, 210).

Food imagery, faster ripening of the cheese and the severe punishment it ensues reflect different aspects of the child/mother relationship. Nurturing and nourishing are biologically attributed to the mother, at the same time, this biological potential is regulated by cultural belief systems of the agricultural societies: rivalry on the part of old women in producing diary – can abundant diary be

Brought to you by | Tulane University
Authenticated
Download Date | 1/12/19 10:15 PM

an indirect reference to abundant breast milk which signifies care and nourishment? – deserves the severest punishment. Not only the Devil, but also the dos and don'ts of the farming culture regulate the lives of mother figures. The old woman who is followed all the time by her black cat is another maternal figure and the cat is a child substitute. The overwhelming emotional bond between the mother figure and the child substitute is considered by the patriarchal society of woodsmen to be another index of the dangerous cult of witchery. And at last, the old woman with supernumerary nipple as a symbol of the hyper-nurturing maternal figure is stripped and stoned to death. Excessive breast feeding, and too much of emotional care-giving and nurturing lead to a threatening union between the child and the mother; patriarchal society considers such a union as dangerous witchcraft, and bans and punishes it severely. Up to this point, a good deal of foreshadowing in the setting of the story, prepares the reader for the deletion of the mother. From the very beginning of *The Werewolf*, old women and mother figures are exposed and threatened; emotional thirst and hunger are hinted at, and at the end of the story salvation comes through the dethronement of the old mother and the enthronement of the new.

After the spooky atmosphere is set, the dialogue between the mother and the little girl is heard. The little girl is sent by her mother to the depth of a dangerous forest to visit her sick grandmother and to feed her thereby with oatcake and butter. The mother is well aware of the dangers on the way but sends her daughter nevertheless to the faraway destination and does not express any concerns because the little girl seems to know how to use his father's knife in case of danger:

> Go and visit grandmother, who has been sick. Take her the oatcakes I've baked for her on the hearthstone and a little pot of butter.
> The good child does as her mother bids – five miles' trudge through the forest; do not leave the path because of the bears, the wild boar, the starving wolves. Here, take your father's hunting knife; you know how to use it (Carter 1995, 210).

The little girl's father is absent but his presence is felt through the phallic knife that the girl uses to protect herself against potential dangers. The girl goes on a complicated quest to meet and mend her grandmother/feminine roots but at the same time equips herself with her father's knife which is responsible for impairing the deep rooted feminine instincts. The fact that the girl's red cloak in the original tale is replaced by sheepskin in Carter's retelling signifies an important change: the little girl in sheepskin is not unlike the good old "wolf in a sheep's clothing." Soon after her coat of sheepskin is described, she hears the howl of a wolf. The encounter between the girl in sheepskin and the wolf signifies The Mirror Stage: the big wolf with red eyes mirrors the inside of the girl who looks like a sheep on

Brought to you by | Tulane University
Authenticated
Download Date | 1/12/19 10:15 PM

the outside. The girl outwolves the wolf by "slashing off its right forepaw." The wolf therefore, is not in Carter's retelling, the representative of the male seducer, but is the archetypal wild woman wounded by the phallic knife. The archetypal wild woman has come to reclaim the little girl's blood in order to repossess her own integrity in the dark deep forest, in the same way the witches on Walpurgirsnacht come to graveyards to dig up and eat fresh corpses and reunite with the dead. Carter's retelling is as much the story of the archetypal wild woman seeking her objet petit a as it is the story of the metamorphosis of Little Red Riding Hood.

Not only is the wolf the mirror image of the little girl, but also identical with her grandmother. When the child reaches the house of her grandmother, the wolf's forepaw is changed into her grandmother's right hand and the grandmother has a festering wound where her right hand should have been. The wolf does not eat the grandmother like what he does in Grimm's tale, but possesses the old woman like a restless spirit. The girl crosses herself and cries for help with the result that the neighbors rush in and force the old woman to the edge of the forest and stone her to death. The symbolic asserts its dominance via different institutions in this story in order to separate female characters from their archetypal femininity: Christian faith (the grandmother is dethroned by her granddaughter right after the little girl crosses herself), pagan beliefs (on Walpurgisnacht, witches attend cannibalistic ceremonies and if found, are stripped and stoned to death by woodsmen), agricultural policies (an old woman whose cheeses ripen sooner than the rest of the farmers is stoned to death), and the father's knife (archetypal woman is wounded by the phallic knife). However, we do not see the role of language which is of primary significance in the initiation into The Symbolic Order: the wolf howls and gulps and sobs, the old woman squawks and shrieks feverishly, the little girl cries out so loud but never do we hear any of them speak comprehensible words, they merely make shrill sounds and do not yield to the systematicity of language. There is therefore compliance with and defiance of *Nom du-Père* at the same time.

Thus, the girl's dethronement of the grandmother and her occupation of the old woman's house, can be interpreted as her effort to find her lost unity with her mother but this effort is mediated by the Symbolic, that is the father's knife. The house in the middle of the forest serves as the objet petit which helps the little girl to inherit the spirit of wild archetypal wolf that had previously possessed the grandmother. The little girl in sheepskin at the beginning of the story inherits her grandmother's heritage and becomes an illicit wolf at the end by occupying the house of the wolf/grandmother. The girl wounds the red-eyed wolf which is her own mirror image, but reunites with the wolf in a more socially acceptable manner. But what is The Real, the individual's social history the recognition of which is complicated by the subtle relation between The Imaginary and The Sym-

Brought to you by | Tulane University
Authenticated
Download Date | 1/12/19 10:15 PM

bolic? The Real is what remains unspoken and unrepresented; it is the circularity that threatens the prosperity at the close of the story. The little girl is going to be an old queen-witch who will be inevitably executed because of the shrilling and shrieking wolf inside her. The Symbolic cannot fully separate the child from her mother, the little girl finds her way back to maternity but the prosperous wild woman grows old, turns into the old witch, and keeps being wounded. The archetypal wild woman however, keeps claiming her rejuvenating blood that has been shed ruthlessly by pagan, Christian, social, familial and economic Symbolic Orders. The bloodshed continues, as well as the shrilling howling of the wolf; and little girls in sheepskin keep inheriting the legacy of the wounded wolf, and keep returning to the Imaginary Order.

Conclusion

A comparison between different versions of the tale can indicate how retellings can deconstruct old fairy tales. Except Charles Perrault's version in which the little girl is eaten up by the wolf as a deserved punishment, in other versions, the girl manages to return home. In Grimm's version, the little girl goes back home wiser after the adventure. Bettelheim analyses the ending of Grimm's tale as a rebirth which moves her from innocence to experience: "When she is cut out of the wolf's belly, she is reborn on a higher plane of existence; relating positively to both her parents, no longer a child, she returns to life a young maiden" (Bettelheim 1976, 213). In Carter's *The Werewolf* however, there is no blessed return to the house she used to live in. The quest that the little girl undertakes, does not lead her to the incorporation of the Symbolic Order. The symbolic phallus is used as a means to recapture the hidden femininity that has been pushed to the margins of society by the phallogocentric culture; the result is a self-sufficient hermaphrodite creature that prospers on her own, opting for an asocial life at the bottom of the forest.

Compared to *The Company of Wolves* – the other retelling of Red Riding Hood in *The Bloody Chamber* – Carter's *Werewolf* is more likely to push at the boundaries of gender roles in fairy tales. The prosperous *hermaphroditism* that can be traced at the end of Carter's Werewolf diverges as much as possible from the heterosexual union between the girl and the carnivore incarnate at the end of The Company of Wolves. In the latter, the girl not only welcomes the approach of the wolf but is willing to "pick out the lice from his pelt" and to "put die lice into her mouth and eat them". The willingness to eat the blood-fed lice covering the body of the wolf can be interpreted as *Feminine Vampirism* filtered within the limits

Brought to you by | Tulane University
Authenticated
Download Date | 1/12/19 10:15 PM

of heterosexual decorum, allowing the girl only access to *processed* rather than the fresh blood; she is allowed a kiss through the veil. The girl in *The Werewolf* however, does not feed on the blood of a male wolf, whether fresh or processed, but usurps the territory of the ancestral wolf-woman and gains prosperity.

The gendered identity of the little girl in *The Werewolf* is hard to define within conventional gender norms: she is a phallic woman who carries and uses her father's knife, on the other hand, she inherits the grandmother's house which was possessed by the wolf or the archetypal wild woman. Her identity is a hybrid of male and female attributes; therefore, she embodies a threat for the phallogocentric culture. Carter writes back to patriarchal determinism by creating a she-wolf armed with male weapons of discipline and punishment. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, growth occurs when the child manages to mediate the demands of The Imaginary through the rule of the Father. The complications concerning the application of Lacanian psychoanalysis to feminist fiction are related to the way mother-child relation is addressed. Lacan's work, Evans explains, "is aimed at shifting the emphasis in analytic theory from the mother-child relation (the preoedipal, the prototype of the imaginary) back onto the role of the father (the Oedipus complex, the prototype of the symbolic)" (Evans 2006, 120). Carter turns this formula on its head in *The Werewolf*: The coming-of-age story of the little girl comes to its fruition when she settles in the house of the witch/grandmother/wolf-woman in the dark depths of the forest, far back from the Lacanian Symbolic Order.

The mother in Lacanian psychoanalysis almost fades into *objet petit a*' when the child is initiated into The Symbolic Order, but in Carter's retelling of this old tale, the mother keeps claiming the power she has been ousted from. The mother in Carter's retelling is never oblivious of her feminine desires. Maternity and femininity fade into each other; the archetypal wild woman is therefore represented in the form of witches, old women and red-eyed huge wolves that are mutilated. Although Carter asserts in The Sadeian Woman that she is against "all the mythic versions of women" (Carter 1978, 5), we see a hybrid creature at the end of The Werewolf mediating between *demythologization* and *remythologization*: the little girl steps on "snow so thickly that the path and any footsteps, track or spoor that might have been upon it were obscured" (Carter 1995, 211), that is, she steps on a tabula rasa which metaphors a demythologized landscape, but her place of dwelling where she prospers, is underwritten by the history of witchery, motherhood, femininity and wolfish instincts.

Brought to you by | Tulane University
Authenticated
Download Date | 1/12/19 10:15 PM

Bibliography

Andermahr, Sonya/Phillips, Lawrence (eds.): Angela Carter: New Critical Readings. London 2012.
Bacchilega, Cristina: Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies. Philadelphia 1997.
Barzilai, Shuli: Lacan and the Matter of Origins. Stanford 1999.
Bettelheim, Bruno: The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales. New York 1976.
Bonnici, Thomas: Female Desire in Angela Carter's Fairy Stories. In: Mimesis 18,1 (1997) 7–17.
Carter, Angela: Burning Your Boats: The Collected Short Stories. New York 1995.
Carter, Angela: The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography. New York 1978.
Evans, Dylan: An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis. New York 2006.
Fink, Bruce: The Lacanian Subject. Princeton 1995.
Homer, Sean: Jacques Lacan. New York 2005.
Jackson, Rosemary: Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion. London 1981.
Jowett, Lorna: Between the Paws of the Tender Wolf: Authorship, Adaptation and Audience. In: Angela Carter: New Critical Readings. eds. Sonya Andermahr/Lawrence Phillips. London 2012, 33–43.
Lacan, Jacques: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954–1955. ed. J.-A. Miller, trans. S. Tomaselli. Cambridge 1988.
Lacan, Jacques: The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience. In: Ecrits: A Selection, trans. A. Sheridan. London 1977, 1–7.
Makinen, Merja: Angela Carter's "The Bloody Chamber" and the Decolonization of Feminine Sexuality. In: Feminist Review 42 (1992) 2–15.
Moss, Betty: Desire and the Female Grotesque in Angela Carter's "Peter and the Wolf." In: Marvels & Tales 12,1 (1998) 175–191, here 188.
Ryan-Sautour, Michelle: The Intermedial Trajectories of Angela Carter's Wolf Tales. In: Journal of the Short Story in English 59 (2012) 75–91, online: https://jsse.revues.org/1322, 1–31.
Sceats, Sarah: Oral Sex: Vampiric Transgression and the Writing of Angela Carter. In: Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature 20,1 (2001) 107–121.
Sheets, Robin Ann: Pornography, Fairy Tales, and Feminism: Angela Carter's "The Bloody Chamber." In: Journal of the History of Sexuality 1,4 (1998) 633–657.
Stephens, John/McCallum, Robyn: Retelling Stories, Framing Culture: Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children's Literature. New York 1998.
Wright, Elizabeth: Another Look at Lacan and Literary Criticism. In: New Literary History 19,3 (1988) 617–627.
Zipes, Jack: Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization. New York 1991.
Zipes, Jack: Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre. New York 2006.

Brought to you by | Tulane University
Authenticated
Download Date | 1/12/19 10:15 PM